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AUTHOR:

CRISP, STEPHEN

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AN EPISTLE OF TENDER
COUNSEL AND ADVICE ...

PLACE:

LONDON

DATE:

1787

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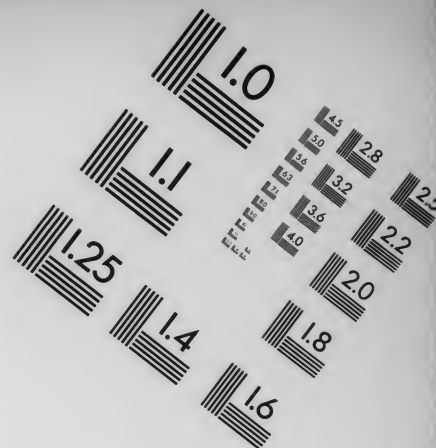
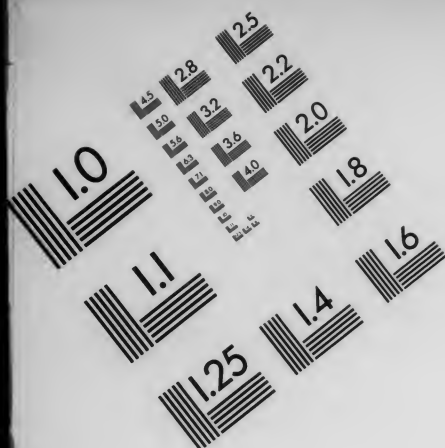


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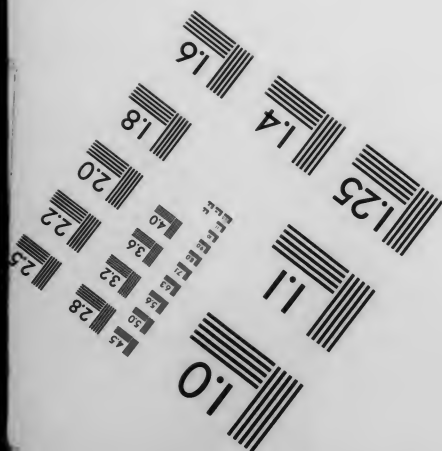
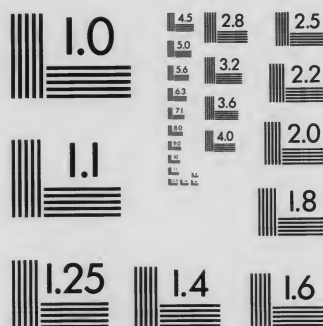
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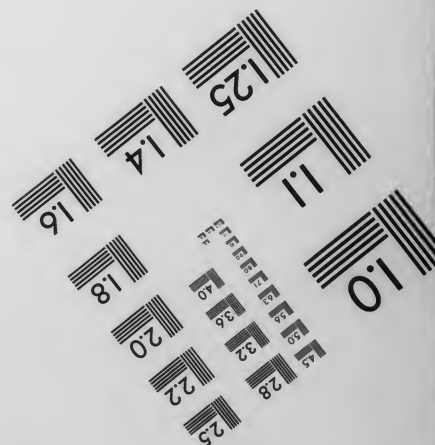
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T E N D E R C O U N S E L
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A D V I C E
T O

All that have believed the TRUTH, to exhort
them to Faithfulness thereunto.

- I. In taking heed of settling in a Formality without
the Power.
- II. To take heed the Spirit of this world doth not
drink up their Spirits.
- III. To keep their Word, and let their Yea be
always Yea.
- IV. Not to trust too much to Education.
- V. To love one another.

Written by one that travails for Zion's Prosperity,

STEPHEN CRISP.

A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed by JAMES PHILLIPS, in George-Yard,
Lombard-Street, 1787.

A N

E P I S T L E, &c.

Dearly beloved Friends, Brethren, and Sisters.

TH E Salutation of my dear love, in the flowings forth of life in the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Head, reacheth unto you all, in the spiritual way of communication, which you are made partakers of in the Holy Spirit, in the reachings forth of this love and life, which we have received from the Father of life.

I am drawn forth to visit you all with an *Epistle of Tender Advice and Counsel*; and especially you, my dear friends, among whom I have travelled in this and other nations. Oh! the remembrance of the glory and power of God, that hath appeared amongst us in days past, doth much affect my soul at this time, knowing the Lord is the same to them that do hold fast the things they have heard and learned from the beginning. And my spirit is exercised among you, caring and praying for your stability and continuance in the truth; that ye may be preserved blameless unto the day of his coming, armed with power, and furnished with wisdom, and prepared with every good gift of the Spirit, to stand against the wiles and subtle workings of the devil your adversary, who is upon his watch, which way he may destroy you, and spoil you of the lot of your inheritance, prepared for you in Christ Jesus our Lord: and for this purpose doth he set all his subtlety at work, and doth instigate many whom he hath already caught in his snares, and sets them as snares to catch more of you, that by their example, ye that do yet stand, might also fall from your steadfastness, and be a prey unto him.

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Therefore,

Therefore, my dear friends, gird up the loins of your minds, and put on the whole armour of light, then you will see round about you, and which way soever the enemy comes to assault you, you will be prepared to resist him. For your sufficiency is in the light, and in the truth, which the devil is out of; and if your eye be kept single to truth in your inward parts, it is not all the deceit of the devil, and all his instruments, can beguile you, but a certain sense will be given you of his mysterious workings.

And, my dear friends, I would not have you forget that there are many ways to weaken and to darken you, which must all be watched against; therefore walk circumspectly, keeping your eye in your head, waiting to feel your strength renewed daily. For be assured, your trials and temptations will be renewed, and if you be destitute of the heavenly daily bread, there will be a daily weakening, which will appear by your being overcome by such things as once you had a power to stand against, which is a great grief to behold in many.

And now I have to warn you of a few things that have for some time lain upon me to send among you, which I do in faithfulness recommend to the pure witness of God in all consciences; not as if I judged any: but this I must tell you, there is one that judgeth, and will give an answer in every one that listens to him, by which he may know how far any of these things have prevailed upon him. And he that judgeth, will also by judgment deliver them that are caught in satan's snares, if they do hearken and submit to his leadings.

First. Take heed, my dear friends, of holding the truth in a bare formality, satisfying yourselves that you have for a long time owned the way of truth, and under this consideration sit down at ease, as to the inward man, unacquainted with the inward travails, either for yourselves or others; unconcerned whether the noble plant grows, either in yourselves or in others. Oh! my friends, this is a dangerous state, more dangerous than my tongue or pen can declare: therefore consider how thy poor soul is beguiled in this condition; for, in the first place, thou art deprived of that daily enjoyment which

which others do enjoy in waiting upon the Lord; they feel his refreshing presence, which either fills them with joy and comfort, or else opens their understandings in the light of a certain knowledge of, and testimony against, such things as yet stand in the way, and hinder the joy of his salvation from them. But thou that sittest in a dry formality, without an inward travail upon thy spirit, thou knowest neither of these things, but goest on in the dark, not knowing whither thou goest, and so in the length of time, thou being such a stranger to the work of truth in thyself, it grows to a question with thee, whether others do witness any such powerful workings, yea or nay; for every thing that is not experimental, is liable to question. As he that never saw, knows not what seeing is; and he that never smelt any thing, knows not what smelling is; so he that through long continuance in this formal manner of going to meetings, continues still unacquainted with the power, will at last be easily made to question whether there be such a power or no; and in this state the dark power will work insensibly, and prevail upon thy spirit, and fit thee for his own purpose, and will minister a secret liberty into thy mind, even as to the form itself by degrees, and so will make thee unfit to stand in some sharp trial that will come to try thee, either in having something, or parting with something, which may be had, or parted with, if thou wilt turn thy back on truth. And when this time of trial comes upon thee, then the strength and advantage that the enemy hath gotten upon thee in the time of thy lukewarm, loose profession, is made manifest; then thou art in great straits for a season. If the temptation be in having a wife, or husband, or a portion, or legacy, or gaining a suit at law, or recovering a debt, or such like things: and the things cannot be had without letting the testimony of thy profession fall, by swearing, or going to a priest, or some other matter contrary to thy profession; oh! what struggling is there in thy soul to obtain the thing thou desirest, and yet wouldest fain be reckoned a friend still, and art loth to be publickly numbered among backsliders and apostates. And so if the temptation and trial comes on the other side, in parting with any thing, which thou lovest, for thy profession sake, as thy wife and children, thy liberty, thy money, thy cattle, thy house and land, or what else may be dear to thee; oh! how doth self work to

save itself, and loth it is to part with the name and reputation of a friend of truth, and as loth to part with any of these things for the truth's sake, not feeling the hundred fold in this time, which Christ spoke of, nor the life everlasting neither.

Here is a day of great difficulty and distress, which is come, and is coming upon many of such careless professors, in which they stand in need of the help of the divine power of God to support them, and to give them victory. But, alas! they are estranged from it. And now the form will not support in the hour of this great trial, but the consultings of flesh and blood are grown strong for want of living in the daily cross; and that nature cries aloud in the ears of thy soul, which thou hast indulged and suffered to live; and if thou considerest the truth, and weighest the testimony of that against thy own will and desire, then thou easily seest which is of most weight with thee; for a false weight, and false balance, and false judgment, is got up in the time of thy careless profession: and then the old deceiver comes in, and tells thee, thou seest no evil in it, or at least, not so much as on the contrary side; so that of two evils, it is wisdom to chuse the least; and such like reasonings fill thy mind, till at last thy will being strong, and thy understanding darkened, thou takest up a resolution to hazard thy soul, and to part with thy dry withered testimony, which thou hast for a long time borne without life, and embrace the price that is bidden for it, as Esau and Judas did, and so sellest the truth which thou once followedst, and deliverest it (as much as in thee lieth) into the hand of its enemy, to be reproached and trampled upon. And this is the fruit and effect of a long carelessness and remissness, which thou thoughtest once would never come to this: and when the servants of the Lord have declared what sad effects such negligence would produce in time, thou hast been apt to bless thyself, and to reckon thou wouldest never run so far out, as publicly to bring reproach upon the way thou professedst. But, alas! thou little knewest that thy soul's enemy was all that while but preparing thee against the day of thy greatest trial, and as it were disarming thee against the day of battle, that he might the more easily overcome thee: but now thou seest thou art fallen, when others, being tried

tried with the same temptations, stand and abide in their testimony; and so mightest thou also, if thou hadst waited upon God in diligence for the renewing of thy strength. Alas! miserable man or woman, what wilt thou do? thy cloak is now pulled off, thy fig-leaf profession is rent, and thou hast but two ways, to wit, to turn thy mind from the object of thy delight, to the truth, which thou hast sold for it, and by repentance, and through judgment, to wait to see if God will be merciful to thee, and to give up now at last to that work thou so much before slightedst; or else to take the other way, and that is, to go on in thy rebellion against the light of Christ Jesus, and add sin to sin, until the custom of sin may take away the sense of judgment, and so thou mayst grow to a fleshly ease, and give over caring for thy future well-being, and, like the beast that perisheth, set thy heart upon the things of this life for a little season, and then cometh the end; and thou who wast once called of God to an inheritance in his light, must now have thy portion in the utter darkness; and thou that wast once called to have been a vessel of honour, art now become a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. Oh! my soul laments the condition of such, and I should rejoice if any of these careless professors of truth might be awakened before it is too late. But, however, I am thus far clear of their blood, and if they perish, the fault will be their own.

A second thing that lies upon me to warn you of, my dear friends, is to watch against the spirit of this world, least it drink up your spirits too much in an eager pursuit after the things of this world, which happens to some, to their great hurt and damage; and the snare lies deep and hidden, under a subtle covering. For whereas it is the duty of every man to take care for his family, and to be diligent in the calling God hath set him in, and to improve such opportunities as God pleaseth to put into his hands; here the subtle enemy works to make the care immoderate, to turn the diligence into slavery, and the improving opportunities which God gives him, to a finding and searching out of opportunities, sometimes by indirect courses, and sometimes to the prejudice of his neighbour; and all to try to satisfy a greedy desire after the heaping up of treasure in this world, and through the earnestness of the affection that kindles

daily more and more, till a man comes in time to have the increase or decrease of these things to be the objects of his joy or sorrow; and then he is miserable: for joy or sorrow are the highest faculties of the mind, and ought to be fixed on the highest objects, and not upon transitory things under the sun. But alas! how are many cast down at losses, and lifted up at profits and gains. Oh! my friends, take heed of this fickle, uncertain state; for while some have too much set their minds upon the things of this world, they have erred from the faith; and placing their trust in uncertain riches, when these have taken their wings and fled away, their hope hath gone with them. Therefore I beseech you, dear friends, have a care of suffering your spirits to be sharpened and set on edge about these outward things; and take heed of enlarging your trades and trafficks beyond your ability, and beyond your capacity: for both these evils have been the ruin of some. For every one that hath ability, hath not capacity for great things; and every one that hath capacity, hath not ability; and where either of these are wanting, such ought to be content with such low and mean things as they are capable to manage, and able to reach, and not to bear themselves too much upon the one, and then seek, by indirect means, to make the other answerable; for no man knows the issue beforehand: and therefore, even in these things, every one ought to wait to know the guidance of the Lord, and to be subject unto his will, though in a cross to their own. As the apostle said of them that spoke in this manner, * *We will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; (which were lawful things in themselves;) yet faith he, For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will: so he that faith, I will increase my trade, and enlarge my adventures, that my gain may thereby be enlarged; even in this he ought to say, If the Lord will.*

Oh! friends, wait to feel the governing hand of God in these things, to govern you in your affairs, that so he may be acknowledged by you the Lord of earth, as well as heaven; the Ruler of your trading and dealings, as well as of your religion and profession.

* James iv. 13.

And,

And, friends, I desire you to remember that the crown of our profession was, that our *Yea was Yea*, and our *Nay was Nay*: and so it is still with all the faithful followers of the truth; though too many have let in a false liberty, since their first conviction, and have not that respect to their words as they ought to have; to the great dishonour of God, and grief of the righteous, and wounding of their own souls. Oh! my friends, let this be amended by every one that hath been overtaken in it, as you tender the honour of God, your own prosperity, and the good of others: for many stumblings have hereby been laid in the way of some who have been near to truth, and they have fallen, and been lost; but they that laid the stumblings, will not be found clear of their blood in the day of the Lord's inquisition.

Therefore let all take heed for time to come, to be true to their word; for all who profess the truth, do in a kind pledge the truth as much as in them lies, or at least their part in the truth, every time they pass their promise, or sign a bill or obligation for any payment to be made at a certain time mentioned in the said promise, bill, or obligation. And such a one hath now no power to dispense with the payment at the time appointed, without the consent of the party to whom he is so engaged; and if he doth of himself delay, or deny payment, he forfeits what he pledged, namely his truth. Now which of you, having pledged your coat or cloak for half the value, upon condition it shall be redeemed on a certain day, or to lose it, would not be careful to observe the day? But Oh! of how much greater value is this pledge, when truth lies at stake? I am sure they that love it, will have more care of it than of a coat, or any earthly thing.

Therefore the ways to prevent all such miscarriages, are to be taken notice of; and in the first place, that none run themselves into necessities by indirect courses, as by an over-charging themselves in trading; nor in over-buying more than they are able to compass; nor by suretyship, which makes a supposed debt, though uncertain, and therefore the more dangerous, because it may come upon you at unawares,

unawares, before you are prepared for it. These things ought, in wisdom, to be prevented before-hand.

Also every one that upon a just occasion doth borrow, and doth pass his word upon the reputation of truth, by promise, bill, or obligation, ought at the same time to have something in his eye of most certainty, by which he shall be enabled to perform his word; and not to trust to returns of adventures, increase of crops, gains of trade, or others keeping their word with him, or any such like uncertainties; for if any do so, they may be in this snare of being unfaithful to their promise before they are aware. But although there is a kind of uncertainty in all these things below, yet where a man's truth and profession are thus depending, and must be discharged or forfeited, there ought, as I said before, to be something most certain in such an one's eye, by which he may save his word; as money that he knows to be ready for his use, or goods in possession, or lands that are free, and can be engaged if the worst come: for you will find more peace in conscience, and a better answering of truth, to make a new engagement of land or goods, than to break an old engagement of your truth and profession.

Dear friends, my heart is full in this matter, and much I could write hereof, but I spare you in love. Be wise in all these things, that so ye may not be in bondage and slavery to the things of this life, but may have a dominion and reign over them, according to your calling in Christ Jesus; that none may have cause justly against any of you, to say, Such an one's Yea is Nay; for then he takes your crown and your pledge, which is hard to gain again.

The next thing that lies upon me, is in respect to such as have been brought up and educated among us, and are grown up, and do make profession of the same way and truth in which they have been educated: that all such may take heed that they rest not in a bare form of the truth, without having regard to their inward travail of soul, and to their growth in the power of godliness. For the snares of their souls enemy lie deep in this matter, and his working is to draw their minds
into

into the world, whilst their bodies, and their publick profession, remain among friends; and to keep them at ease and liberty from the daily cross, and from the crucifying power, by which they should travail to subdue that nature in themselves which is grown up in their youth, as well under this profession as under any other, where the power is not minded diligently: and by this means many are and remain unfitted for the *testimony of truth*, wanting to be rooted and grounded in it, through an experimental warfare in their own particulars. For, my friends, I say unto you in the words of the Lord, *Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God*: and if ye cannot see that, what availeth it what you see? for all sight, vision, and opening of things, will not save nor deliver your souls in the day of trial that will come upon you for the trial of your faith; and then if your faith be such a one as stands in words and terms, though never so true, yet it will fail you in that day, and you will not be able to stand.

Therefore, dear friends, sink down in lowliness and humility, and wait to feel the power revealed in you, and join your minds to it in a living faith, that you may come to experience every vain thought and exalted desire, and every idle word, and evil action, to be judged by the pure judgment of truth, and a subduing of that nature that lusteth unto disobedience of the righteous law of God in your hearts: and as that nature is kept under the daily cross, it will weaken and die daily in you, and the weaker it is made, the more you will feel of the powerful quickenings of the word of God in your souls, and a tender life will spring up in you, to your great comfort, that will be tender of the glory of God, and of the honour and reputation of your profession. And as you join herewith, you will be acquainted with the travails of the true Zion, the mother of us all, who brings not forth but through deep exercises; and although this will take you off from the delights and pleasures, and loveliness of this world, yet the end will repay all your sorrow; for this will bring you to know the worth of truth, and teach you to set a value upon it, and upon every testimony of it, beyond all transitory and fading things; whereas
others,

others, who have lightly come by their profession, will lightly esteem it, and lightly let it go again. Therefore my concern is, that you might be wise unto salvation, and for that end do I send this to you, that ye might be brought to try your foundations, every one in yourselves, before it be tried for you; for then it will be too late to come to the true foundation, or at least it will be through greater hardship. When the cry at midnight is heard, and the time of entrance cometh, it will be too late to buy oil to your lamps; and then such who have a lamp, and no oil, will be shut out. Therefore prize your time, and examine what reason you have in yourselves to make profession of the name and way of God, more than that you were educated therein, and brought up to it by your parents, guardians, or masters. Have you ever felt the heavenly virtue of it overshadowing your souls? And if you have, do you retain and keep the favour of it still upon your spirits? Do you feel yourselves possessed with that awe, fear, and reverence of the Lord's presence, which the Lord's people felt in the beginning of their day, and the faithful do still feel? Is the inward enjoyment of the life of truth a greater joy to you than all your outward enjoyments? If so, then you will not sell it, nor part with it, for any thing in this world: and the testimonies, which such do bear for the truth, will not be traditional, but from a sensible conviction in themselves; so that they will be able to say, "These things have we received from the Lord, and they are the testimonies of God manifested to us in the light of his Son Christ Jesus, in whom we have believed."

Oh! friends, how will this drive back the storm of temptations that will come, both inwardly and outwardly, in a time of trouble? How many are there, who for want of this assurance in themselves, have been brought to great questionings and doubtings, and knew not whether to go backward or forward? and many have halted and staggered, and some have fallen, and rose no more, to the ruin of themselves and others. Therefore, my dear friends, trust not to the resolutions of your own spirits, without a sense of the power, nor to a receiving the truth by your education, but all wait to be made living and true witnesses of the

rising

rising of the power in your own hearts, and of the carrying on of the work of the power in yourselves; to the regenerating you, and bringing you to that birth that trusteth in nothing, but in the Lord alone, and hath him for its support in the greatest exercises. Then shall ye stand and remain, and be a generation chosen of God, to bear his name and testimony, and to commit it to the next generation.

And, friends, let the brotherly-love that was sown in your hearts, as a precious seed in your first conviction, continue and increase daily; that as ye are made partakers of one hope of salvation in Christ Jesus, so ye may continue of one mind and heart, according to the working of his spirit in you, having a tender respect one for another, as children of one father, and as such who feed at one table. For Christ hath ordained, and doth ordain in all his churches, that we should love one another; that we should shun all occasions of offences and grief; walking orderly, as becomes his holy gospel, that we may be an honour thereunto, and a strength and comfort to one another. This is our great ordinance, our new commandment, which was also from the beginning, and will always abide the same through all generations. Therefore, my friends and brethren, let the fruits of sincere and brotherly-love abound amongst you both in word and deed, and let none be wanting in fulfilling the law of *Charity*, without which all profession will be but like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

But if this life be kept to, the life of religion will be felt, and each one will be taught his duty and charge concerning another, and know how to give comfort in charity, to admonish in charity: to reprove in charity, and also to receive these in charity; and this will exclude for ever all whispering, and tale-bearing, and bring to dealing plainly and uprightly with every one, not suffering sin to rest upon the soul of thy brother, but to deal with him quickly, and with plainness, yet tenderly, even as thou thyself wouldst be dealt withal. And however this kind of dealing be taken, thou shalt not miss of thy reward, but thy peace will remain with thee: for while friends are looking to the power of God, as their guide

guide and leader in all these things, and their design is simply God's glory, the clearing their own consciences, and the good of their brother, they will not be discouraged in their undertakings; for they know the power will certainly come over whatsoever opposeth it: and this will keep your minds quiet and free from disturbances, when you see men, and parties, rise against the power, knowing that the power is an everlasting rock. But as for those things that appear against it, they are but for a season, in which season patience must be exercised, and the counsel of wisdom stood in, and then you will be kept from staggering, or from scattering, by all the fair shews the spirit of opposition may make.

For they that enjoy the life and substance, and feed daily of the bread which comes down from heaven, have a quick sense and discerning of things that are presented to them, and do know them that are of the earth, by their earthly favour, from those that are of the heavenly, with their heavenly favour. They know what feeds the head, and the wit and carnal reason, and what will nourish the immortal soul; and so come to be fixed, and are not ready to feed upon unfavoury food, nor to be easily tossed, nor to be troubled at evil tidings, nor cannot be drawn after one thing or man by an affection, nor set against another man nor thing by a prejudice: but the true balance of a sound judgment, settled in the divine knowledge, according to the measure that the Father has bestowed, keeps such steady in their way, both in respect to their own testimony and conversation, and also in respect to their dealing with others.

Oh! my dear friends, in such doth the truth shine, and such are the true followers of Christ, and they are worthy to be followed, because their way is as a shining light, shining on towards the perfect day. And in this sure and steady way, my soul's desire is, that you and I may walk, and continue walking unto the end of our days, in all *sobriety, truth, justice, righteousness, and charity*, as good examples in our day, and comfortable precedents in our end, to them that shall remain. That so we may deliver over all the testimonies of our Lord Jesus unto the succeeding generations,

generations, as pure, as certain, and as innocent as we received them in the beginning; and in the end of all our labours, travails, trials, and exercises, may lay down our heads in that sabbath of rest that remains always for the Lord's people.

This is the breathing desire that lives in me, for you who have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ; in whose name, and in a sense of his power, and of the life he hath revealed in every member of his whole body, I salute you all, and bid you farewell.

STEPHEN CRISP.

1680.

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1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

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